December 2015 e-newsletter

Dear Friends of Kehila Kedosha Janina,

Wishing all our Jewish friends a Happy and Healthy Hanukah and all our Christian friends a joyous Christmas/

Hanukah Lamp from Ioannina-circa 1868
This newsletter, our 82nd will, as always, cover news regarding Kehila Kedosha Janina and news concerning Greek Jewry. We hope you find our newsletter interesting. Your feedback is of utmost importance to us. If you missed previous issues, they can be accessed on our website (www.kkjsm.org).

We now reach over 7500 households worldwide, with our community of ‘friends’ continually growing with each newsletter. If you know others who wish to be part of this ever-growing network, please have them contact us at kehila_kedosha_janina@netzero.net.

As always, you are all invited to attend our Saturday morning Shabbat services. Just give our Shamas, Sol Kofinas, a heads up (papusoup@mindspring.com) so we are sure that our Kiddush (traditional Greek Jewish Kosher foods) is sufficient. If you wish to sponsor a Kiddush for a special occasion or an Adara, contact Sol.

Passings

~ We mourn the passing of Stella Cohen, wife of Morris Cohen OBM, who passed at the age of 94. Stella and Morris had been long time congregants of Kehila Kedosha Janina. Stella was born into the Michaels family on the Lower East Side. She is survived by her son, Mitchell, daughter, Reyna Flax and grandchildren Jessica and Samantha Flax. May her memory be a blessing.

~ We mourn the passing of Mary Akkos Calef, born in Athens Greece on 05/21/1939 and leaving us on November 24, 2015. Mary survived the Occupation of Greece as a hidden child. After the deportation of her father, Menachem Akkos, Mary, her mother and siblings survived in hiding with the help of a Christian woman. Mary is survived by her husband, Stan; daughters, Lisa (Marc) DeMaat, Rochelle Calof, Laura (Daniel) Zelle; sisters, Esther (Harvey) Winthrop and Bertini (Melvin) Bergstein; grandchildren, Nathan and Benjamin DeMaat, Eli and Mira Zelle in addition to numerous nieces and nephews, one of whom is our Board of Trustee member, Marc Winthrop. Mary’s daughter, Laura Zelle was so inspired by her mother’s story that she created a film, “In the Shadow of the Acropolis,” which we are proud to sell at Kehila Kedosha Janina.

Akkos family in Athens 1943

Mary Calef
~ We mourn the passing of Betty Myone, wife of Hyman Myone. Betty is survived by her husband of 70 years, Hyman Myone, her children (Rebecca, Steven, Jerry, Irving) and many grandchildren. Betty OBM came from the Ganis family of Ioannina, while her husband’s family came from Arta.
~ We mourn the passing of Rose Matza Albala, just short of her 100th birthday. Rose lived at 279 Broome St. Her father was a Matza and her mother an Elias.

~ We mourn the passing of Jack Benoze (aka) Benozilio, brother of Estelle Benozilio Hendrickson. Jack passed away at age 84 on July 25th in Stowe Vermont after a very long battle with MS.

Jack’s family came from Salonika (from the Houly and Benozilio families. He was an accomplished artist and is survived by his wife, Rita and sister Estelle.

~ We mourn the passing of Itzhak Navon (April 9-1921-November 6, 2015), the fifth President of the State of Israel (from 1978-1983). Mr. Navon died in Jerusalem, where he was born. He was the son of a long line of Sephardic rabbis, his family having come from Spain over 300 years ago after the Expulsion of Jews from Spain. He was president of the Israeli Committee on the preservation of Latino (Judeo-Espanyol) and had taken part in a conference on Latino in Thessaloniki a number of years ago.

Thank you Samuel Hassid for this information.
Simchas

~ Dr. and Mrs. Kenneth Alvin and Sandra Bernette Solomon celebrated their 41st Wedding Anniversary in Calabasas, California on November 30th. Kenny is the son of the late Meyer Ovadia Solomon, whose parents, Solomon and Anna Ovadia were born in Ioannina, and the late Esther Solomon, is Romaniote on his father’s side of the family and Sephardic on his mother’s side. Sandi is the daughter of the late Meyer and the late Norma Malman and is of Sephardic heritage. Sandi and Kenny have three children, Marc, Bryan, and Elisa.

Mazal Tov.

Wedding of Kenny and Sandi Solomon

We welcome hearing about simchas from our community. It is truly our joy to share your joys. If you lament not seeing your family photos in our e-newsletters, do share them with us. We can only publish them if we have them!

Δikoi Mas, Los Muestros (our own) come home

We love when our own visit Kehila Kedosha Janina. In November, we were honored by the visits of members of a member of the Hametz family and a member of the Menahem family, both of these young ladies from important Romaniote families. We loved the opportunity to welcome them. Melissa Klepper and Rebecca Eshelbrenner conveniently showed up together on November 15th, each with their significant others. Melissa is the great-granddaughter of Rabbi Israel and Pernoula Hametz, her grandmother, Molly (Eftihia) Blau OBM born in Ioannina, the youngest of eight children of Israel and Pernoula. The Hametz family were an important part of our spiritual community in New York.

Rebecca Eshelbrenner is the great-granddaughter of Samuel Menahem and Esther Barouch, both of OBM and the granddaughter of Michael Menahem and Rebecca Matza Menahem (both OBM).
What both the Hametz and Menahem families share in common, in addition to their Romaniote backgrounds is that both families came to the United States relatively late and were not part of the massive wave of Romaniote immigration from 1889-1924. The Hametz family came from Ioannina in 1928, after the quotas limiting immigration were instituted in 1924. In fact, it was a letter written by Kehila Kedosha Janina requesting his immigration because of the need of a rabbi that enabled his immigration. Samuel Menahem came with his family in 1930. Samuel was from the Moise family (the family of Menahem and Lula Moise) but the name had somehow been changed from Samuel ben Menahem Moise to Samuel Moise Menahem. Samuel had gone from Ioannina to Turkey for economic reasons. His children were all born there.
On November 29th, we had a lovely visit from Shirlee Cabellis Paganetti, who came with her “double cousin” Steven Cohen and his wife, Jane and, then, Anita Altman (from the Coffino family) who Shirlee used to babysit in the Bronx.
In November, we were particularly honored to welcome Solomon Parente and his son, Michel to Kehila Kedosha Janina. Solomon, who is now President of the Committee of the Jewish Community of Thessaloniki was visiting his son, Michel, who now lives in Manhattan.
Past Museum Event at Kehila Kedosha Janina

On November 22nd Kehila Kedosha Janina was honored to welcome one of our own, Jack Jacobs, who earned the Congressional Medal of Honor for exceptional heroism on the battlefields of Vietnam. He also holds three Bronze Stars and two Silver Stars. Jack signed purchased copies of his book, “If Not Now, When?: Duty and Sacrifice in America’s Time of Need.” We have only 5 signed copies left. If you wish a copy for $20 (includes P&H) contact us at kehila_kedosha_janina@netzero.net.
News From Greece

In November, Alexis Tsipras, Prime Minister of Greece visited Israel, met with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, the Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Jerusalem and had an emotional visit to Yad Vashem. He also paid a visit to the Greek Club in Jerusalem.

Yvette Nachmiás presents Tsipras with a collection of poetry on women healing Israeli/Palestinian relations
News From Jewish Greece

Meeting of European Rabbis in Athens

On November 10\textsuperscript{th}, Head rabbis from around Europe visited Athens for a major conference.

While there they were greeted by the President of Greece, Prokopis Pavlopoulos, and Moisis Konstantini from The Central Board of Jewish Communities. The attended services at Beth Shalom Synagogue and visited the Jewish School in Athens.
Hanukka will begin Sunday night, December 6th with the lighting of the first candle. And it would be a fair assumption that the vast majority of KKJ bulletin readers know the basic story of Hanukka and the main events commemorated on this 8-day holiday of Rabbinical, and not Biblical, origin, and especially the famous victory of the "few over the many" and the return of religious freedom to the Land of Israel and the miracle of one cruse of pure and sanctified olive oil for lighting the Temple menorah lasting eight days instead of only one.

Perhaps less known, however, are the events that occurred after the famous Hanukka story, as well as the political and spiritual impact they had on Judaism and Jewish sovereignty for generations to come.

First of all, the war against the Seleucid Greeks and their Hellenistic Jewish allies within Israel continued well after the Maccabean victory, with constant attempts by the Greek forces to reconquer and reoccupy Jerusalem. In fact, the Talmud itself tells us that despite that apparent miracle of the cruse of oil occurring the year the Maccabees won their amazing victory, the institution of the holiday of Hanukka was postponed for another year, because the war and bloodshed had not ended. Only over time could it be determined whether this amazing victory was indeed a lasting phenomenon. Similarly, a miracle must be perceived as such by the people, which again could not be immediately assumed in the midst of the event.

However, the Maccabean victory and Jewish sovereignty did last, with the last surviving son of Matityahu (and brother of Yehuda) becoming the leader of the Jewish people and the forerunner of the Hasmonean royal dynasty, which lasted 103 years, until being wiped out by King Herod. During this time, the Temple returned to its religious centrality and significance, and Jewish life was no longer threatened by persecution or desecration.

Unfortunately however, the Hasmonean's quickly let their victory and unbridled power corrupt core Jewish values and law. For example, one of Judaism's cardinal and Biblically mandated principles is probably the earliest version of "separation of powers", which forms the basis of the United States Constitution, in that the monarchy – the political leadership – and the priesthood – the religious and spiritual leadership must remain totally separate, with the former coming only from descendants of King David, (the original tribe of Yehuda), and the latter from the priestly dynasty – the Cohanim – which descend from Aharon, the first Cohen. However, whether out of circumstance or premeditated planning, the Hasmoneans seized the monarchy as well as the priesthood, which led to fierce opposition of the Sages. In fact, the later Hasmonean rulers identified with the Sadducees - powerful and wealthy priests who opposed Talmudic and Rabbinic law and tradition- and began persecuting and even murdering "Rabbinic" Jews. Even worse, the Hasmoneans fought wars for self-aggrandizement, ruthlessly crushing anyone even suspected of not supporting their rule. And though Jochanan Hyrcanus, Shimon's son, enacted several decrees to improve the spiritual level of the people, he committed a severe error with
drastic implications for the Jewish people, by forcibly converting the conquered Edomites to Judaism – another violation of Jewish law – including the family of Herod the Great, which led, once again to terrible suffering for the Jews and the end of both Hasmonean rule and Jewish autonomy in the Land of Israel.

In fact, the Talmudic account of Hanukka is a short and amazingly brief description, which speaks almost exclusively about the miracle of the cruse and only a passing mention of the Hasmonean-Maccabean victory. While some commentators say that this is due to the Talmud’s main interest in the spiritual side of Hanukka, others interpret this as a deliberate omission to reflect the Sages anger and condemnation of the later Hasmonean corruption and total disregard for Jewish law. In fact, many classic commentators blame the Hasmoneans and their corruption and violation of Jewish law for the ultimate conquest and occupation of Judea by Rome and the end of the Jewish commonwealth for thousands of years.

All of that notwithstanding, the basic message and theme of Hanukka continues to resonate amongst Jews and non-Jews alike: fighting for religious and political freedom in every age and location, and our belief in God’s miraculous intervention at all times. Happy Hanukka!

On Sunday, November 15th, the Greek-Jewish Young Professionals met for the first time. The group hopes to attract Greek Jews (both Romaniote and Sephardic) in the New York area who are in their 20s and 30s, and who are interested in perpetuating their special heritage. Kehila Kedosha Janina was happy to host the group and so thrilled to see sons and daughters of many dear friends.
The Greek Jewish Young Professionals will be having their first Hanukah Party on December 7th. Below is the invitation. Please RSVP.

- JOIN US FOR A -

GREEK JEWISH YOUNG PROFESSIONALS

HANUKKAH PARTY

Thursday December 10th  |  7pm
280 Broome St NYC

Candle Lighting  Live Greek and Sephardic music by Avram Pengas  LES Bar Hopping

“Secret Sephardic” Gift Share
Bring a gift valued up to $25 and receive a gift!

RSVP to GreekJewishYPN@gmail.com
Request For Our Help

A number of years ago we were approached by Prof. Dr. Hans-Joachim Lang of Ludwig-Uhland-Institut in Germany. Professor Lang was researching victims of Professor August Hirt, a German anatomist who was allowed to remove healthy prisoners from Auschwitz-Birkenau, have them killed and, then, used their bones for his anatomy classes. To hide his crimes, the bones were buried. The numbers of the prisoners that had been etched into their skin at Auschwitz were duplicated on the bones so it was easy to identify the victims afterwards. Professor Lang’s work has been to, not only identify the victims to give closure to their families but, also to tell something about them in his book, literally to put "flesh on the bones."

There were 86 victims, most from Salonika. Professor Lang is asking for our help in finding the sister of Emma Amar who was born in Salonika on June 5, 1925. Emma’s sister survived the Holocaust. Her name is Evangelia Taptopoulou. The Professor is looking to find Evangelia or her descendants. If you have any information, please contact us at kehila_kedosha_janina@netzero.net.

We love when readers share their memories and photos with us.

Max Negrin is such a special man in so many ways. He is one of the few people left who loves to write, not resorting to abbreviations like LOL, etc. I love when he sends me memories from his past evoked by something in our recent newsletter.

"Dear Marcia,
I just got through your (always) welcome newsletter, and was somewhat shocked to learn of the passing of Mollie Levy. Many memories were brought to mind at the news... our families went back so many years and there were so many uncanny similarities we shared that I’d often felt that some out of earth body put us together.

Molly was the middle daughter of Abe and Esther Cohen, who moved into an apartment on the second floor of a new building at 81 Orchard Street, in the late 1920’s. They were from Janina (where they were born), had three daughters, Julia, Mollie, and Stema, in that order. At around the same time, my parents, Abe and Esther Negrin, who were born in Arta and Tricala, (respectively) and had three sons, Jacob, Samuel, and Menahem (Max... that’s me, and, as a kid, I shed the Menahem... I determined, as a four and a half year old, entering kindergarten, that I wasn’t going to be called that!) also moved into that same building, on the fifth floor, in the same three room apartment, just three floors above them. Needless to say, the Negri and Cohens didn’t know one another, before meeting at 81 Orchard Street. (Later, they moved up and we moved down, and we all lived on the fourth floor, in larger apartments) Aside from their naming their children with the same first initials (we were all born before they met) Abe and Esther Cohen were married (in Janina) on March 12, 1921, and my parents (Abe and Esther Negrin) were married on March 12, 1922, (a year to the day) in Alexandria, Egypt, where their families were living at the time. (incidentally, my father, who was living in the US, after leaving his family in Egypt to come here, enlisted in the U.S. army and fought in WW I). He returned to Egypt to marry my mother, on the advice of her uncle, Elia DeCastros (her mother’s brother) who had moved here, and knew my father. All the daughters were older than the sons, with their youngest, Stema and myself, being the closest in age... she was born April 27, 1927, and I was born on May 22, twenty five days later. Everyone in both families (including Stema and myself) assumed that we’d eventually marry one another, but this belief came to an end, when I came home on my first liberty from the Navy Air Corps, we went on our first date as "grownups". After going out, we both walked up to the fourth floor, and kissed in the hall we both shared.... It was
like kissing a sister (if I had a sister), and I think it may have felt the same to her. We both attended one another's weddings some years later.

I don't remember ever having spoken about that with anyone, before.

Max Negrin”

If our newsletter evokes memories, please share them with us. We love them!

We were fortunate to acquire precious photos that we wish to share with you.

We love seeing our community celebrate. How beautiful that 100 year old Manny Asser was celebrating Thanksgiving with his family. We love you Manny. Jack Jacobs was overjoyed to learn that you were at his Bar Mitzvah!
We love this photo of Greek-Jewish refugees taken in 1954 in Redondo Beach, California.

We thank Gentile Smith for the photo and are particularly grateful to Gentile’s remarks: “This is a photo of Greek Jewish REFUGEES.... at Veterans Park in Redondo Beach... My parents are to right, the couple 3 in, the top row... My brother Joe Bensoua and his twin Mattika Rosenthal are in the front row, Joe's back to the camera, Mattie has a baby bottle... our Yaiyai is to their right. Where I am, I have no idea. Just wanted to show others what REFUGEES look like, and share my thankfulness to all the kind AMERICANS who sponsored all of us to make new lives in the United States after the Holocaust.

Why we are showing photographs, we love this one of Paul Hagouel in Hungary on November 4th. This is a perfect opportunity to thank Paul on all his work to keep the story of the Holocaust of Greek Jewry fresh in the memory of the world, so that our losses will not be forgotten. Paul's work on Holocaust Studies is so commendable.
Jack Jacob’s visit to Kehila Kedosha Janina enabled us to acquire some precious photos of his Yanniote family.

Jack’s Papoo

Rebecca & David Jacobs
Jack’s parents

We are now in the process of translating archival material having to do with the Saporta Family from the Jewish Community of Volos. We thank Sarah Crocker from the Honan and Cantos families for her contribution. We are honored to print some of the photos acquired from this translation.
1925 Volos-young members of the Sakki and Saporta families

Ilias and Rozina Saporta with their daughter Marika at the beginning of the 20th century

Recommended sites on the internet.

Ioannina with Allegra Matsas


Correction

Hi Marcia,
In the latest newsletter, my Aunt Roz Matsil Gershuny was mentioned as I had requested. However, for some reason, her daughter in law, Nancy Winstein, was omitted as a survivor. She is survived by her son Lee, his partner, Nancy, and son Howard.

Amy
So many of you have applauded our efforts. We thank those who have sent in contributions.

If you would like to make a contribution to Kehila Kedosha Janina, please send your check (in US dollars) made out to Kehila Kedosha Janina, to us at 280 Broome Street, New York, NY 10002 (attention Marcia). Your donation will enable us to continue to hold services and preserve our special traditions and customs, and to tell our unique story through our Museum.

When you are in New York, visit us on Broome Street. We are open for services every Saturday and all major Jewish holidays and our Museum is open every Sunday from 11-4 and, by appointment during the week.